

## Current Economic Programs Printed Survey Results: by the *Expenditures for Residential Improvements* Statistics Users Respondent Base

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U.S. Census Bureau  
Current Economic Statistics User Survey

OMB CQM-26 (Rev.5/5/98)

### I. DATA CONTENT

Your answers identifying the survey data you use will help us understand our users' patterns of data use.

1. Which Current Economic Statistics from the Census Bureau do you use? (Mark all that apply.)

#### (1) Monthly

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0.0%;	0	None
57.0%;	90	Retail Sales
43.0%;	68	Wholesale Trade
44.9%;	71	Manufacturing/Trade Inventory/Sales
91.1%;	144	Housing Starts
77.8%;	123	Building Permits
81.6%;	129	New Home Sales
79.7%;	126	Value of New Construction Put in Place
73.4%;	116	Housing Completions
100.0%;	158	Expenditures for Residential Improvements
81.6%;	129	New Residential Construction
47.5%;	75	New Mobile Home Placements
46.2%;	73	Monthly Imports and Exports
48.1%;	76	Current Industrial Reports
48.1%;	76	Manufacturers' Shipments, Inventories, Orders

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Replies 158; Forms 158

#### (2) Quarterly

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49.4%;	38	Quarterly Financial Report
81.8%;	63	Current Industrial Reports
7.8%;	6	Federal Assistance Awards Data System
22.1%;	17	Quarterly Tax Survey
13.0%;	10	Quarterly Public Employee Retirement

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Replies 77; Forms 158

#### (3) Annual

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52.7%;	78	Annual Retail Trade
42.6%;	63	Annual (Wholesale) Trade
18.9%;	28	Annual Survey of Communications
24.3%;	36	Transportation Annual Survey
28.4%;	42	Service Annual Survey
49.3%;	73	County Business Patterns

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29.7%;	44	ZIP Code Business Patterns
38.5%;	57	Statistics of U.S. Businesses
64.9%;	96	Characteristics of New Housing
61.5%;	91	Annual Building Permits
52.0%;	77	New Residential Construction in Selected Metropolitan Areas
35.8%;	53	Annual Capital Expenditures
56.1%;	83	Annual Survey of Manufactures
48.0%;	71	Current Industrial Reports
15.5%;	23	Research and Development Survey
29.1%;	43	Plant Capacity Utilization
9.5%;	14	Education Finance Survey
14.9%;	22	State Tax Collection Survey
8.8%;	13	Annual Public Employee Retirement
12.2%;	18	Annual Survey of Public Employment
13.5%;	20	Consolidated Federal Funds Report
23.0%;	34	State Government Finances
39.2%;	58	Annual Imports and Exports

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Replies 148; Forms 158

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## II. DATA DELIVERY

The Census Bureau is considering use of the Internet as the primary method of data delivery. By completing the following questions, you will help us retain the most essential delivery formats and design the best possible data delivery service.

(4) 2. How do you receive current economic data now? (Mark all that apply.)

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89.2%;	140	Printed Publications	17.2%;	27	FAX
81.5%;	128	World Wide Web (Internet)	8.9%;	14	Direct (E-mail) delivery
29.9%;	47	CD-ROMs	1.3%;	2	Regular mail
23.6%;	37	Diskettes	6.4%;	10	Other

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Replies 157; Forms 158

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- Electronic "Bulletin Boards"
  - Check values by telephone
  - also use microfiche in some cases.
  - time-share vendor (private)
  - DRI DATABASE
  - Individual sources using census bureau data
  - Newswires
  - Intermediate Data Vendor.3,4,6,
  - Overnight Delivery of NIA data
  - Subscribe to America Statistic Index on Microfiche
  - STAT-USA+WEFA Group
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(5) 3. What format do you PREFER when downloading data for further manipulation? (Mark all that apply.)

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77.6%;	118	Spreadsheet (e.g., wkl, xls, etc...)
31.6%;	48	Database (e.g., dbf, mdb, etc...)
29.6%;	45	ASCII delimited
22.4%;	34	ASCII flat files
17.1%;	26	Retrieve from print or screen and enter manually
8.6%;	13	Do not manipulate data
0.7%;	1	Other

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Replies 152; Forms 158

- TSO files

4. What capabilities do you want on the Census Internet site? (For each line, indicate the degree of your preferences, from 5 [high] to 1 [low].)

(6) a. Direct (E-mail) delivery:

47.9%;	68	5	19.7%;	28	3	7.0%;	10	1
12.7%;	18	4	7.7%;	11	2	4.9%;	7	Don't know

Replies 142; Forms 158

(7) b. E-mail notification:

48.9%;	69	5	17.0%;	24	3	7.8%;	11	1
12.8%;	18	4	8.5%;	12	2	5.0%;	7	Don't know

Replies 141; Forms 158

(8) c. Retrieve/display to screen:

58.4%;	80	5	10.9%;	15	3	6.6%;	9	1
15.3%;	21	4	1.5%;	2	2	7.3%;	10	Don't know

Replies 137; Forms 158

(9) d. Search:

68.2%;	101	5	12.2%;	18	3	0.7%;	1	1
15.5%;	23	4	0.7%;	1	2	2.7%;	4	Don't know

Replies 148; Forms 158

(10) e. Download complete data sets:

68.3%;	99	5	8.3%;	12	3	3.4%;	5	1
15.2%;	22	4	0.7%;	1	2	4.1%;	6	Don't know

Replies 145; Forms 158

(11) f. Download selected data:

75.3%;	110	5	4.8%;	7	3	1.4%;	2	1
13.7%;	20	4	2.1%;	3	2	2.7%;	4	Don't know

Replies 146; Forms 158

(12) g. Software help/tutorials:

14.7%;	20	5	30.1%;	41	3	9.6%;	13	1
18.4%;	25	4	19.1%;	26	2	8.1%;	11	Don't know

Replies 136; Forms 158

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(13) h. Publication-quality printing:

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32.1%;	45	5	17.9%;	25	3	10.0%;	14	1
19.3%;	27	4	17.1%;	24	2	3.6%;	5	Don't know

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Replies 140; Forms 158

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(14) i. Charts and graphs:

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32.2%;	46	5	19.6%;	28	3	10.5%;	15	1
18.2%;	26	4	16.1%;	23	2	3.5%;	5	Don't know

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Replies 143; Forms 158

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(15) j. Geographic maps:

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28.6%;	40	5	15.0%;	21	3	10.7%;	15	1
24.3%;	34	4	13.6%;	19	2	7.9%;	11	Don't know

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Replies 140; Forms 158

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(16) k. Other, please specify:

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70.0%;	7	electronic bulletin board	30.0%;	3	Other
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Replies 10; Forms 158

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- Publications like QFR to be in spreadsheet format or mdb for easy data manipulation after downloading.
  - ACROBAT FILES, which you may include in item h.
  - Update full report at release time
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(17) l. Electronic Bulletin Board (To collect write-ins)

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100.0%;	2	5	0.0%;	0	3	0.0%;	0	1
0.0%;	0	4	0.0%;	0	2	0.0%;	0	Don't know

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Replies 2; Forms 158

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### III. DATA USAGE

Your answers describing how you use the data will help us design the most effective Current Economic Statistics retrieval tool.

(18) 5. Do you combine/compare/merge data from more than one source listed in Question 1?

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20.6%;	32	No	79.4%;	123	Yes
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Replies 155; Forms 158

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(19) 6. What time periods do you consider when using these data? (Mark X all that apply.)

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64.3%;	101	5+ years	42.0%;	66	trends up to 1 year
60.5%;	95	trends up to 5 years	0.0%;	0	Other
51.6%;	81	latest 1 or 2 periods			

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Replies 157; Forms 158

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(20) 7. How do you use the data? (Mark all that apply.)

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51.6%;	79	Create value-added products/services
37.9%;	58	Perform patron/client inquiries
34.6%;	53	Inform marketing decisions
23.5%;	36	Republish in newspaper/journal
22.9%;	35	Inform investment decisions
17.0%;	26	Store reports/printouts for archival purposes
7.2%;	11	Locate new sites
0.7%;	1	Other

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Replies 153; Forms 158

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- Store data in database.
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(21) 8. What explanatory information do you consult when using these data? (Mark all that apply.)

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74.2%;	112	Definition of terms
60.3%;	91	Sampling and estimation methodology
58.9%;	89	Narrative text describing survey results
44.4%;	67	Survey design
10.6%;	16	None
2.0%;	3	Other

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Replies 151; Forms 158

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- Direct contact with Census analysts
  - Comparisons to earlier surveys and/or similar data from other agencies--e.g. census to BEA in one estimates.
  - Regression analysis
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(22) 9. Do you have any pressing data or information needs that are not currently being met?

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- We are very much interested in unadjusted counterparts of tables 7 & 8 of the FT900 release being made available on internet on the day of release. Publications like QFR also need to be made available in spreadsheet or mdb for us to further manipulate data.
- No. Increasingly more and more data sets are becoming available electronically-which makes our work easier by eliminating manual inputting of data.
- Regional retail sales estimates (cancelled after 1996)
- Non-residential building permit data.
- State/MSA non-residential construction data!
- Find it difficult to get info a local area ie. N.E., Urban, but not specific such as New York. Also, like annual building Permits in greater detail to states or county level.
- Retail Trade Monthly - Regional Data Survey - Blue Pages, Building Permits - Non-Resident & Additions.
- I do not receive all the requests all the time.
- Apartment (Multi-Family) Statistics.
- Information on nonresidential construction.
- Data on residential construction; alterations, renovations and conversions; and county level mobile home shipments.
- New remodeling data from American Housing Survey.
- MCD Business Patterns, Massachusetts is doing away with county government, MCD income estimates.
- Timely release of data in an easy-to-access format (ie: XLS, 123, etc.) with revisions and option of pulling complete time series.
- Non-residential building permits--number by type of building.
- The availability of Residential and Commercial Building Permit Data.

- Accurate and timely international statistics on the air conditioning, refrigeration and heating industry.
- We use and would like to continue to use retail sales by county data and the merchandise line sales data.
- Permit data on remodeling.
- Int'l trade data on internet are inadequate. Only press releases are there. When data are revised, if data are not in the press release, there is no way to get the revisions (ex: monthly data from exhibits 6&7 of FT900).
- Monthly historical trade data.
- Better capital expenditure data and Better motor vehicle data.
- More timely data.
- Data on non-residential construction.
- Any commercial construction activity-new or improvements
- Yes--Commercial building permits--Bring them back now!!!
- Resume geographic estimates of retail sales.
- YES! Bring back non-residential state/local permits authorized! This was a severe loss for interpreting local economic trends. Also, more geographic detail, more frequently.
- Wish you were more current...
- State, county & local permit data for nonresidential construction. Use to get this.
- Pollution abatement expenditures by SIC
- 1). Employment in types of projects, such as residential construction. 2). Construction productivity measures.
- Forecast data for construction markets.
- Up to date residential improvements data garage door 1 garage door openers involved in improvements.
- Better categorization of Import/Export information. It is very difficult to determine how much of some of our products were imported or exported.
- Want monthly retail trade by state & MSA back.
- Non-residential Building permits.
- Housing stats and completions by state, MSA Value of construction put-in-place by stats, MSA
- Place and regional economic data sets in relation to population/race trends.
- Yes, but this will always be the case!
- Expenditures for non-residential construction, especially non-residential reconstruction.
- We always require information broken out by minority group status, even if they are forecast.
- Make data reports easier to print off of the web.
- Average expenditures per residential improvement project for single family homes by region. Average value for residential permits by region.
- Move capital expenditure data--more frequent, more detailed
- Housing Starts by State; Retail Sales by State
- Website is extremely difficult to navigate.
- Non-residential permits!!
- Would like to see MA33L on quarterly basis.
- Need more timely delivery of C-50 data (Res. Improvements). There is no contemporary measure of remodeling activity.
- Median income and poverty tables are not in spreadsheet form (they once were).
- Imports and exports by 4-digit SIC. Very important--in print. Publication form--quarterly.
- Non-residential new construction and renovation
- Rent data and vacancy rates.
- Census of retail trade 1997 merchandise sales report - need ASAP
- Monthly service sector sales counterpart data to retail, wholesale, and manufacturing shipments.
- Permits for remodeling and non-residential construction.
- The more detailed (down to specific product line) the better.
- The more history, the better.
- Commercial, Industrial, and other non-residential construction put-in-place!
- Immediate posting of data revisions when significant revisions are undertaken.
- We have a need for long historical time series and for long-term forecasts.
- Commercial Building Permits County level on a timely basis.
- Non-residential building permit data collection should be restored by state and metro area!

- Commercial building permits, Commercial real estates sales.
- As a foreign academic library, we are concerned about cost of access.
- Report on production of industrial fabrics
- Yes-I need non-residential construction series (commercial, industrial, etc.) on a geographic basis-as used to be done!
- Building Permit data are not as complete as before - Rental vacancy rates & rental would be helpful.

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#### IV. INDUSTRY CLASSIFICATION ISSUES

We will soon begin restructuring the Current Economic Surveys based on the new North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). Your answers will help us ensure that these surveys continue to provide the economic information needed by markets, policy makers, and business people. For more information on NAICS, see the Bureau's web site: <http://www.census.gov/NAICS>.

(24) 10. At what levels of detail do you MOST FREQUENTLY USE industry data classified by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC)? (Mark all that apply.)

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66.4%;	99	4-digit industries (or maximum detail I can get)
36.9%;	55	2-digit major groups
36.2%;	54	3-digit industry groups
34.9%;	52	Sector totals (SIC division); e.g., Manufacturing or Retail Trade
13.4%;	20	NA (don't use SIC-based data)
2.0%;	3	Other

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Replies 149; Forms 158

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- Construction Put in Place Categories
  - UP TO 8-DIGIT
  - 6-digit product data
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(25) 11. Were you aware that the SIC system is being replaced by the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)?

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28.2%;	44	I was unaware of this
32.1%;	50	I am partially aware, but lack details
39.7%;	62	I am aware and understand some implications

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Replies 156; Forms 158

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12. Would you like to receive more information about NAICS?

(26) Yes, please send me - (Mark all that apply)

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88.1%;	89	A brochure that explains NAICS	30.7%;	31	Conference announcements
68.3%;	69	NAICS implementation plans	4.0%;	4	Other

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Replies 101; Forms 158

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- Contacted by local information office fo Bureau.
  - Already have all the information I need.
  - I already have the CD
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(27) No Thanks -

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80.4%;	45	I will check the Census Bureau's web site ( <a href="http://www.census.gov/naics">www.census.gov/naics</a> )
19.6%;	11	I don't need more information about NAICS

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Replies 56; Forms 158

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V. USER PROFILE

Please tell us about yourself so we may serve you better.

(28) 13. Type of organization.

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53.5%;	84	Business	4.5%;	7	Media
15.9%;	25	Government	1.9%;	3	Individual
14.0%;	22	Academic/Research	2.5%;	4	Other
7.6%;	12	Association			

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Replies 157; Forms 158

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- Information and consulting firm
  - Building Material Manufacturer
  - Library (University)
  - Corp. Library
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(29) 14. Do you work in your organization's library?

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26.8%;	41	Yes	73.2%;	112	No
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Replies 153; Forms 158

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(30) 15. What is your affiliation with the Census Bureau?

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80.8%;	122	None	0.7%;	1	Census Information Center
6.6%;	10	State Data Center	7.9%;	12	Other
4.0%;	6	Business/Industry Data Center			

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Replies 151; Forms 158

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- State Government Agency.
  - Federal User
  - Cooperator in disseminating permits authorized data
  - Depository
  - Affiliate Data Center
  - DOC Staff
  - Data use.
  - GPO Depository
  - Trade Association
  - Building Permit Depository
  - Associate Data Center
  - Federal Depository Library
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(35) 20. May we contact you to follow up on this questionnaire?

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80.7%;	117	Yes	19.3%;	28	No
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Replies 145; Forms 158

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(36) Question 21. Remarks:

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- It would be nice to have all reports available in spreadsheets format. For any publication reports that contain large tables and data, mdb file format would be an ideal too.
- We greatly appreciate this survey. I'd like to stress one major concern we have: As you move toward complete Internet delivery of data-please continue to publish "hard copies" of the economic reports for us to compare as backup. We have noticed that occasionally there are errors in Electronic Bulletin Board and Internet files--so we rely on the hard copy as backup. We use it as a safeguard. Thank you and feel free to contact me at your convenience.
- A published paper version should always be made available for purchase to the public. Information being available on the internet is nice, yet it is a completely different animal than having a hard copy version of the information. An example: I can receive my new off the internet, but I still prefer to get my newspaper in the morning for reading at my leisure away from a computer.
- When is 1997 Census to be available? Please keep as much of the data in print as possible-- Thanks!
- Census bureau data is always helpful--the data you provide enhances our publication and enables readers to make informal business decisions.
- --But please ask for Deborah Foster.

Thank you.

- You have set up an excellent web site that is easy to use, fast and usually supplies me with the information I'm seeking.
- Thank you for your great service!
- I prefer e-mail contacts rather than phone, as I am frequently not available at my phone for extended periods.
- We serve a varied clientele (academic, business, government, and private citizens) and work across many subject. Census data are absolutely vital to us. Our biggest need is for more geographic area detail more frequently (state, county, place, if possible). Users often do not understand the 5 yr. gaps and lag time for the major Economic Surveys that offer such detail, much less the 10 yr. decennial cycle. The internet is a great help in speeding "publication", but we find access is not yet universal. We still download and print entire documents for guide reference and historical purposes. I am concerned about just how long the electronic medi will remain accurate and usable as technology changes. How will the Bureau deal with these problems?
- Sorry for the delay--the survey didn't arrive until 8/12/98.
- PDF files are big and we have to retype the data for analysis. Having raw or spreadsheet/database data would save us much time. BLS's web site is a good one to study.
- State and Local Government Finance Estimates, by State. We appreciate having this information on the Internet but wish the report was still published. Is there any way of compiling the data sooner? It is almost too old to be of any use.
- I think that this user survey is an excellent idea; you should poll users periodically.

I would be happy to participate in a users' panel or advisory group.

- We look forward to working with you on the upcoming Census.
- Be sure that all information is made available in the most "user-friendly" manner possible!!
- Tables which have no column headings and which one must consult separate documents are highly confusing.
- I always use your data for the economic releases. My major concerns are: timeliness of data availability on web and being able to print the data from the web without having to reformat printing fonts. I also to the revisions when they come out, but often the location and structure of the revisions is confusing.
- Current setup on the web is extremely frustratingly for someone trying to print/download data and reports

-> Make .XLS files available with lots of historical data.

\_\_\_ Use .PDF filrds for pasting your releases -Having to flow ascii into a word processor and reformat is not the way to go. Email sub would be helpful

- Would be helpful if classes were offered in best techniques when seeking govt. data on the Web.

Location on Web tha would state what media given U.S. Govt. was available in (papers, Internet, etc.)

- I find the Census Website to be fairly difficult to use. It's hard to find information that I need. For example: I was trying to find tables on the number of Households & spent probably 45 minutes locating it.
- We love the Census Bureau! Clear publications indices and ease of search engines on the Internet site are very important to us. Also, choice of how to download data is good, not all users need or can use spreadsheet software.
- prefer e-mail
- I'd like to receive a list of publications at a State Data Center is entitled to receive on the regular basis. I'd also like to get the description for the data we receive.
- Please provide me with the description of the monthly and annual products listed on the front page.

Figure 1: